

Woman of the Family

By May Edginton

ILLUSTRATED BY JAY HYDE BARNUM



"A job that pays marvelously isn't always the safest. I mean a job can pay too marvelously"

The Story Thus Far:

SPONSORED by Lennie Ward, a young dancing man who professes to love her, Eve Langham, secretary of Sir Edgar Marter, a London business man, becomes the hostess of the Regalia, a night club. Exploited by her avaricious father and mother, she does not confide in them. And presently, shocked by the too-ardent advances of Sir Edgar, she gives up her day work, and takes a small flat of her own.

Eve has a sister—Sophia. Beautiful, but unscrupulous, Sophia inveigles Lennie Ward into marrying her; after which she secures a job—as Sir Edgar Marter's secretary! . . . Under the watchful eyes of Fero, the Regalia's manager; Assistant Manager Hopton; and Tonetti, the orchestra leader, Eve becomes a popular hostess. And one wealthy patron—Captain Jonathan Horne, an explorer who, for reasons of his own, is in close touch with Scotland Yard—pays her marked attention.

Eve, however, soon learns that Horne, fascinated by her, regards her as a calculating gold-digger. Infuriated and bitter, she deliberately strengthens his suspicions that she is not the sort of girl he should marry by accepting a small jade elephant—a very costly gift—from him. . . .

Among the wealthy women who patronize the Regalia is an American—Mrs. Louise Poinsetter. It is thought that she and Horne are very close friends. They are not, although they are together frequently. Horne, it appears, is interested in the woman's past; he is especially interested in the source of her large income.

For a time, Eve goes her way serenely. Then comes an unexpected shock. Her mother calls on her and informs her that Ward, her son-in-law, of whom she has been so proud, and who has been living with the Langhams, will contribute nothing toward the family's support; and that Sophia has been discharged by Sir Edgar. Eve, none too prosperous herself, gives her mother more money.

Later, alone, Eve has another visitor. Louise Poinsetter!

OH, WHAT a cunning place," cried Louise Poinsetter's rich, slow voice. "May I come in?" "But of course." Once more Eve unfastened that gate, and as she did so she had a queer, swift sensation that, like her mother, Louise Poinsetter was in some way an unlucky harbinger.

As the elegant woman crossed the threshold she brought with her, unfathomably, a sense of danger.

Eve ushered her visitor into the sitting-room and a few minutes went by in conventional admiration, womanly interest, amiable congratulation.

That clock outside struck twelve.

With distaste Eve realized that she herself was not yet dressed, and it was midday. But this fact did not at all seem to surprise Mrs. Poinsetter.

"How lovely you are like that, child," said she. "Isn't it wonderful to look as nice in a cotton wrapper as you do in those grand frocks of yours? I hope I am not in the way, but I just had to come in."

"It is nice to see you," Eve said. "How did you find me?"

"Ah!"

Mrs. Poinsetter's "ah" was so complete and expressive that the fact that

she had not replied to a question escaped notice easily. Indeed, she followed up quickly with: "I expect a lot of people manage to find you out, don't they?"

"Well, not yet. I have only just moved in."

"And I suppose you're awfully thrilled," said Mrs. Poinsetter, "simply crazy over home-making. You couldn't be prized out, could you? You're going to live here forever and ever."

"As long as I can pay my rent!"

"Aha," said Mrs. Poinsetter flexibly. "Perhaps what I am going to say won't be very popular with you, then."

"NEVER mind that," Eve answered. "It won't be the first unpopular thing I've heard this morning."

"Is that so?"

"It is," Eve said a little grimly.

"Who's been worrying you already?"

"Family."

"Oh, family," cried Mrs. Poinsetter with a little *moue*. "Families are terrible things to have, aren't they?"

She walked lightly to the windows and looked out into the tree tops and murmured, "It's nice here," as if she were thinking of something else; and

then, turning, she said in a voice that sounded as if it might have a catch in it, yet hadn't:

"So—you've got a family, have you?"

"Mmm."

"Lovely curtains, my dear," said Mrs. Poinsetter, touching the golden folds beside her absently. "Parents?"

"Yes, I have parents."

"I've forgotten mine! Well, sometimes it is nice to have them, and sometimes it isn't; eh, Miss Langham?"

"I'm afraid I feel like that," Eve sighed.

"Sisters and brothers?"

"One sister—just married." And then—she did not know why—she looked straight at the other woman, revealing all her trouble, her dismay and the heaviness of her responsibility: "She married that good-looking boy who dances at the Regalia so much—Lennie Ward; if you know him by name."

"Oh, yes, yes, I know him by name, and by sight too, of course. He is the handsomest thing, isn't he?"

"Is he?"

"You don't like him?"

"Not for a brother-in-law."

SHE sighed sharply. Her obsession with the family this morning was such that it did not seem strange to her to be here with this *mondaine*, telling her without preamble homely yet drastic troubles.

The twelve strokes of that clock which had chimed outside a few minutes ago lingered in her ears.

"After twelve o'clock. I'll shake you a cocktail."

"Oh, grand!" Mrs. Poinsetter cried lightly.

And by and by, in leisurely fashion, they were in the sitting-room again with the icy, fiery liquor, and the fascinating little dishes of olives and almonds, all of it such a far cry from the Dulwich *ménage*. Especially was Mrs. Louise Poinsetter an arresting contrast to the harassed woman who so recently had sat in that easy-chair.

She symbolized the new life.

But her persistence had a curious intensity.

"And so you love your family?"

"Unfortunately one does."

"One should," Louise said rather slowly. "One should cling to one's landmarks. It does a girl no good to cut loose."

"The difficulty," said Eve succinctly, "is money. I have to provide it."

"Is that so?"

"It is pretty hard work providing it out of a salary from a city office. In fact, it is almost impossible."

"I should imagine it would be. And so you find this other job pays better?"

"It pays marvelously."

"Listen," said Mrs. Poinsetter, "and you mustn't tell your boss, that Fero, that I have mentioned it to you—but a job that pays marvelously isn't always the best and the safest. I mean a job can pay *too* marvelously. The marvelous pay is to make up for the risk."

"I don't see a risk."

Louise paused while she poured herself another cocktail.

"These clubs come and they go. You'd be better, wouldn't you, looking out for something permanent?"

"I hope this is permanent. Mr. Fero thinks he may be able to employ me on

the Continent when the season ends."
"Does he now?"

It wasn't a comment; it was a cry, almost savage, from the heart. Perplexing, had one been in the mood to attend.

But she came back naturally and easily to the subject of Lennie Ward. "And so that dashing gigolo is your brother-in-law? Does he—does he—now don't think me impertinent for asking—does he make much money out of the Regalia Club?"

"None at all except what he may get from old women for dancing with them. And he gets his dinner, and he loves the gay life. It seems to him good enough."

"Well, then . . ." said Mrs. Poinsetter, and paused.

Again, though indefinably, Eve sensed that stress, that undercurrent of danger—but to whom?—under her visitor's light and easy poise.

"Well, now, if he is to be a family man, I should have thought that he'd better take his talents and his looks elsewhere, where they would pay him; and if I were you, I should advise him so, my dear."

"He's not my pigeon."

"Oh, come now, my dear! If he is your brother-in-law! You seem sore about him, but remember I've had a lot of experience and I will tell you that,

taking it by and large, it pays to keep close to your family, to try to help your family to run straight—"

"Straight?"

"Oh, well, straight is rather an extreme word maybe," Mrs. Poinsetter corrected herself quickly. "What I mean is, it would be far better for your sister, and that would make it better for you, if Mr. Ward tried to capitalize his assets elsewhere."

"Yes. . . . But of course he is flattered by the way Tonetti and Fero treat him."

"Is he now?"

Again it wasn't a comment. The irony made those three little words bite. She raised a hand as if in some urgency asking attention: "Listen, my dear. I took the opposite way with my family. I quit."

"You. . . . But . . ."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Poinsetter. "I know I seem—people have the impression and I take care to give it—that I come from rich aristocrats—such as we have over on the other side quite as much as you do here. But . . . I was a poor girl, like you. Rather much like you—I thought that the first time I saw you. That, and thinking about my own little daughter—oh, she's safe; a countess now in Italy, lost to me, thank God!"

"Thank God!"

Louise went on easily: "Well, you make me think of my daughter, whom I haven't seen for such a very, very long time, and I don't like to see you wasting yourself over this dance club business. If you've got to have money it is just possible I—" And then she stopped and laughed, and said with irony, "Even I—I could put you on to something. I have friends." And then she stopped again, and in the softest, queerest voice, repeated: "Even I."

Now Eve confirmed to herself that she couldn't understand this woman.

IT WAS the most unexpected of visits, developing in the most surprising way. She said:

"You're terribly good. Of course I'm grateful, but what other job would pay me ten pounds a week?"

"Ten pounds a week?" Mrs. Poinsetter echoed. "Ten pounds!" The voice now was not so much surprised as angry. One had a sensation of a still, breathless anger in her. She narrowed her eyes in a way she had, and looked steadily at the girl. "Money isn't everything. There might be other things. Travel in a foreign country. I have a relative in India whom I haven't seen for many years, but occasionally we still correspond. Once we were very dear to each other. She's . . . rather highly placed. She's had the real and solid kind of good fortune; but she hasn't forgotten me. I think if I asked her she might make use of a young girl like you as secretary. Now a job like that would be partly a social thing. You'd meet the kind of men you ought to meet. I want you to have the solid kind of good fortune. You'd marry. I am sure you'd marry." She stopped, and ran on again, "Behold the maternal complex working strongly!" She tried to laugh at herself, but it was not very successful.

"India?" Eve repeated.

Yet she felt no thrill. It was not only that she could not go even if opportunity offered, because of the family loading her with their cares, but that she did not want to go.

And that was strange, for she had never had any ocean traveling, and pictures rose up in her mind at once. Intense colors . . . gayety . . . an Eastern pageantry new to her . . . a future. . . .

But she did not want to go.

She looked up again and saw Louise Poinsetter leaning toward her, watching her face intently.

"If I cabled my relative now, today,

I'm sure she would cable back 'Yes.' If she didn't want you herself, she could find a friend who did. She is very rich."

"I have told you I can't. It isn't for myself. It is for my family."

Louise stopped, her exquisite, thin hands on her thin hips. "Very well, your family is the big obstacle, and I don't want you to leave the obstacle behind; but all the same it is not only your family you're thinking of; for you're not even hankering . . . for India."

AFTER the little considering silence between them, she went on steadily: "If you're thinking of Jonathan Horne—don't." And watching, she saw a wave of color sweep up under the girl's white skin.

She cried sharply: "Give Jonathan Horne a wide berth!"

Though her voice was sharp, she had kept it low as if from habitual caution. Yet, low as she pitched it, it carried. Its quality was resonant; and so it traveled to the ears of Horne himself as he reached the top of the stairs and stood outside that amusing gate.

He did not hear all that Mrs. Poinsetter said, but he heard his own name clearly.

For a second he stood there listening for more, his face at its grimmest, and then, as if deliberately, he put the grim expression away. He presented himself in a debonair mood as he gave the gate the little rattle which was the only way a visitor could herald himself.

Inside the room they both heard that slight peremptory rattling, and Mrs. Poinsetter's voice dropped to a whisper.

"That's Horne," she said, as if some intuition warned her.

The next moment Horne and Eve faced each other, as they had done quite often during the last two weeks, through the iron grille.

He sensed that she was disturbed and wary.

Indeed, Louise Poinsetter's peculiar warning had startled her.

He noted also, in that second, that she was still in negligee—beautifully taut and fresh, but still in negligee after noon.

"Aha," he said, "caught you napping. May I really come in? Are you alone?"

Although, of course, he had heard Louise Poinsetter's unmistakable voice so clearly.

HE FOLLOWED through to the sitting-room and saw the elegant woman standing by the windows observing Bloomsbury Gardens. He saw the cocktail tray, with two glasses.

Mrs. Poinsetter spoke the first greeting charmingly and naturally:

"Oh, Captain Horne, I am sure you've called to take Miss Langham out to lunch, and here I am chatting and hindering her so that she isn't ready."

He said:

"Yes, I have called to see if Miss Langham would come out to luncheon with me." He turned to Eve: "Will you?"

She hesitated as she always did with him. There had been so much between them to make her hesitate, to be uncertain, to put him down as a brute, a bully, a friend, an enemy—she had no more idea by now in which category to place Jonathan Horne than she had at the beginning of their amazing acquaintance. But while she hesitated, Mrs. Poinsetter answered for her:

"Don't bother about me, my dear, run along and get dressed. I'll give Captain Horne a cocktail if there is one left."

There was one left.

Louise went, herself, to the kitchenette for another glass.

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"One of those bargains one hears about," he heard her murmur incredulously. "Like a bad melodrama"

The Smoky Years

By Alan LeMay

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN GANNAM

The Story Thus Far:

TWO rival outfits—Ben Thorpe's and King-Gordon, owned by "Dusty" King and Lew Gordon—are struggling for dominance in the Southwestern cattle country. Thorpe and two of his aides, Walk Lasham and Cleve Tanner, making a bold bid for victory, murder King.

Bill Roper, King's adopted son, is preparing to marry Jody Gordon, Lew's daughter. Having made his plans for avenging King's death, he tells her of them. She promptly breaks the engagement. Whereupon, without the cooperation of Gordon (who is, likewise, violently opposed to his plans), he goes into action.

Tanner is Thorpe's agent in Texas, where he rules over a vast cattle domain—all stolen. In Montana, Lasham plays a similar role. Leaving Ogallala, Nebraska, Roper organizes a band of outlaws—"Dry Camp" Pierce, Lee Harnish, Tex Long and others—and makes a series of raids on Tanner's strongholds. After which, meeting his enemy in a pistol duel, he kills him.

In Montana, where he then goes, he pursues the same tactics against Lasham. Elated by his success, he takes a brief vacation in Miles City. There a girl—one Marquita, of whom he knows almost nothing—saves his life. Trapped by Lasham and two of his cowboys, he escapes when Lee Harnish and Tex Long come unexpectedly to his rescue.

Meanwhile, Jody Gordon has not been idle. Still loving Roper, she has followed his every move. She has learned that Thorpe has put a large reward on his head—and that Thorpe is plotting to murder her father, who, he strongly suspects, is backing Roper. Believing that both of her men are doomed, unless they work together, she goes to Montana, where her father is observing operations. She can do nothing with Gordon. "Roper," he exclaims, "is an outlaw. I won't work with him. Instead, I'm going to double that reward Thorpe's offered!"

The girl then turns, in desperation, to Shoshone Wilce, one of Roper's friends. She begs him to take her to Roper's headquarters. He does so. But they do not find Roper. Jim Leathers, one of Lasham's men, and another cowboy greet them—with rifle fire. Wilce makes his getaway. But Jody is captured. Leathers asks her a few questions. Then—"What time," he says, looking her straight in the eyes, "were you expecting Roper?"

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I HAVE no reason to expect Bill Roper at all," Jody said.

The younger man's eyes were keen with a repressed excitement. "Jim—you figure she come to meet Bill Roper here?"

"She didn't come here by accident," Leathers said with conviction, "any more than you or me. And she sure didn't come here to throw in with us."

"But, God, Jim—if she's run off from her old man to throw in with Roper, then it must be that Gordon ain't backing Roper, after all! Why should she come gallivanting clear out here, if Gordon and Roper are hand in glove? We always thought—"

"That's no bother of mine," Leathers said. "Roper's the man I want." His voice turned soft and happy. "Just kind of begins to look like I'm going to get him!" He turned sharply on Jody. "You can just as leave speak your piece. We'll get the whole story, anyway, when the boys bring your side rider in. He'll talk, all right, before we're through!"

"You'll learn nothing from him," Jody said. "If he didn't get clear I have no doubt he's dead. You'll never take him alive—that I know."

Jim Leathers grinned a little. It did not improve his looks. "Suppose they bring him in only about half alive?" he suggested. His tone changed as he

added, "Of course, as for me, I'm sure hoping he got away."

A swift panic struck Jody with the shock of a blow in the face. If Jim Leathers wished, he could hold her here—literally as bait with which to draw the man whom it was his mission to kill. If Shoshone Wilce had got clear, and could reach Roper, Roper would certainly attack, as soon as the best ponies of the raiders could bring him. Or, failing to locate Roper, Shoshone Wilce might even bring her father—and what orders Jim Leathers had in regard to Lew Gordon she could only surmise.

"I'm getting sick of this," Jody told Jim Leathers. "You owe me a horse; there can't possibly be any argument

about that. I'll have to ask you to rope a pony and bring him to my saddle—and I'll be on my way!"

"Awful bad job, catching up these Sioux country ponies in the dark."

"For more than five years," Jody said, "neither you nor your men have camped out the night without ponies waiting under saddle. Right now you've got caught-up ponies standing outside. You owe one of them to me."

JIM LEATHERS spoke mildly, measuring his words. "You've rode a long way in the cold," he said. "The boys'll get you some coffee and grub and bring your bedroll in. I guess you better figure to stop the night." He grinned again, not reassuringly. "We're a little

crowded here, and maybe not so stylish as you're used to; but that ain't going to hurt you none."

"I don't want your coffee, and you know it," Jody said.

Leathers ignored that. "Who *was* this side rider of yours?" he demanded.

"You'll learn nothing from me—neither that nor anything else. I'll take a pony—and I'll take it now!"

Slowly Leathers shook his head.

"You won't give me a pony?"

"I'm afraid—you'll have to wait until your friends come, lady."

For Jody Gordon's white flash of anger there was no outlet whatever. She turned away to hide from them the furious tears that sprang into her eyes. She took off her sheepskin coat and flung it on the table, for the room was very hot; but because her fingers were still chilled to the bone she pulled off her gloves, tucked them in her belt, and



A teamster met her in the road as he was coming into town with his team just after dark